

THE LIFE OF
Cleretta Nora Avery,

—THE—
Wonderful Colored Girl Preacher

—C—
Eleven Years of Age,
AND HER WORK IN NEW YORK.

From Her Dolls to the Pulpit.

By MRS. W. G. AVERY,

CARTHAGE, N. C.

1897.

RECORD JOB PRINT, WILMINGTON, N. C.



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The Wonderful Colored Girl Preacher.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH—PARENTAGE, EARLY CONVERSION AND PREPARATION FOR HER WORK.

CLERETTA NORA AVERY, the wonderful and famous ten year old colored girl preacher, inspired evangelist and powerful revivalist, was born in the city of Washington, D. C., September 18th, 1885. She is the second child of her parents, her infant brother having died about fifteen years before she was born.

Cleretta's mother, Mrs. Victoria G. Avery, was originally Miss Victoria Georgie Andrews, a woman of remarkable intelligence, industrious habits, high character, and fine personal appearance, who was born in Pensacola, Florida, about the year 1846, of African and Spanish parentage. Her parents died early in life, and when but a very small child Victoria was carried to Mobile, Alabama. During the dark and terrible days of the civil war, when many slaves were making their escape across the lines to the free lands of the North and Northwest, and many others in the South were in danger of being captured by the Federal troops and liberated—in those dark days that tried men's souls—Victoria was removed from Alabama to Texas. She remained there until the first year of the war, when an attempt was made to sell her as a slave. She made her escape by disguising herself as a Spaniard, which was quite natural and because of her Spanish color and features, and ability to speak that language, and by riding a distance of about three hundred and fifty miles on horseback into Mexico. Here she remained several years, acquired a more perfect knowledge of the Spanish language and customs, mingled freely with the best classes in that country by reason of her intelligence and personal beauty, and was everywhere received as a cultivated Mexican woman. Many interesting lectures have been given by Mrs. Avery on this period of her life, in which she relates the many thrilling experiences through which she passed during the many years of her early life spent in Texas and Mexico.

After the war Victoria returned to Mobile and married an early acquaintance and friend of her childhood days, Moses Brown Avery. Mr. Avery was a remarkably intelligent, industrious and conscientious man, who was born, also, in Pensacola, Florida, and was about fourteen years her senior.

He came of intelligent and well-to-do parentage, his father having been an associate of and a co-laborer with Fred. Douglass, James Summerville, Willis Pope and other distinguished colored men who played a prominent part in the anti-slavery and abolition movement before the late unpleasantness.

Early in life Moses B. Avery embraced religion and united himself with the Methodist Episcopal Church, North, where, shortly afterward, he was ordained a minister of the gospel. It was not long after this that his ardent love for his race, and his desire to be more fully identified with his people in all enterprises looking to their advancement forced him to transfer his Church membership to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church connection. In the conferences of this church he was soon recognized as a strong and influential man, an independent thinker, and an outspoken leader among his brethren.

Though much of Mr. Avery's time and energies were devoted to the preaching of the Gospel and the performance of church duties in the towns and cities of the Southwest, where his appointments were generally located, yet he always maintained a lively interest in the Christian education of his race and did much to advance the general education of the colored people in the States of Louisiana and Mississippi. Besides advocating liberal state appropriations for colored public schools in the religious paper of which he was editor and proprietor, he founded educational institutions and became principal himself for a time of several local schools in the South and Southwest that are now accomplishing much good and are great levers in the elevation of the colored race. Mr. Avery was generally regarded as a man of strong convictions, a bold and fearless writer and an eloquent speaker. He was always true and devoted to the interests of his race, for whom he suffered many things while advocating their civil and political rights and privileges; and in one particular instance he was known to have forfeited three thousand dollars to help a poor unfortunate colored man out of a difficulty.

During the last few years of his life the Rev. Avery did the work of an evangelist, for which he had special qualifications, mainly in the State of North Carolina, whither he had removed, and traveled around exhibiting a panorama of Biblical scenes, until his death at Aberdeen, N. C., in May, 1895, in his sixty-third year of age, beloved by his many brethren and friends and mourned by a faithful wife and affectionate daughter.

Cleretta was converted when about eighteen months old. Many persons have been inclined to doubt this statement, but when it is remembered that Samuel and John the Baptist were accepted and blessed by the Lord,

when infants, and that many eminent Christians date their conversion from so early an age that they can scarcely recall the momentous change, it will be admitted that God is able "to choose the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," and "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings" to ordain strength and perfect praise. Cleretta's early regeneration was not impossible, for God has "hid these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them unto babes."

In preaching she always refers to her early change of heart in words like these: "I was converted when a year and a half old. I remember quite well the day when I felt a new love in my heart and I became acquainted with Jesus, knowing him for myself. Some people say that my father or mother or somebody told me so; yes, it was my father, but he was my heavenly Father. You may doubt it, but since God knows it and I know it, I am quite well satisfied, God's Holy Spirit can acquaint a little child with Himself before that child knows its parents."

In the early development of the intellect and tastes of the subject of this sketch could be readily seen the sure signs of her coming greatness. She was a remarkable child; thoughtful, prayerful, reverent, obedient and to this day she is a strong advocate of temperance. But let it not be presumed that she is ignorant of the ways and wiles of children. She was fond of her many dolls and playthings, and like the great Chalmers, who, when three years old was found standing on a chair in the nursery preaching to an audience of one little girl from the text "Let brotherly love continue," so Cleretta delights "to play preaching" with children smaller than herself. Her love for her dolls may be seen from the following interview with her, which appeared in the *New York Recorder*, November 23rd, 1895:

"Cleretta Avery, the colored child preacher, with whose eloquence the readers of the *Recorder* are already familiar, will preach at the J. S. Williamson Mission, 125 West third street, this evening at 8 o'clock, and again at the Baptist Church in Waverly Place, on Sunday night.

That she is truly a most remarkable child has been evinced; that she is a phenomenon is not to be doubted. She is a demure little thing, with big black eyes and a serious expression. She has a frail little figure and a head of abnormal shape.

The mixture of childish fancies and maturity of brain ability gives her a peculiarly odd manner.

"Cleretta has a most wonderful collection of dolls, numbering in all about 150. In telling about them she said: "I only bought a very few. Some of them are china, some kid—different kinds, you know. They are

all white except one. That I bought. I have only two boy dolls. I can't remember all their names, of course. One is named Adler. How do I spell it? A-d-l-e-r, I reckon, and one is named Tonet, after Mrs. Gen. Greely's two little girls in Washington. My biggest doll is named after me and the smallest one isn't named."

Then she brought forth from the recesses of a large trunk some remarkably specimens of her family. One bisque young lady with flaxen curls wore a gown of red with lace and steel ornaments, such as was never seen even at the Horse Show, and such a hat as must have filled its sawdust heart with pride. "Her name is Mamie," she said.

"Which one do you love best of all," asked the *Recorder* woman? Then that little lady displayed the chief characteristic of her sex, for she replied innocently: "I love one of my boy dolls best."

Then she told all about the object of her affections. "His name is Prince Albert. He has curls hanging down around his neck. He wore a blue suit, and it had a pocket. I play house, have church, parties and marriages."

"Are your children religious?"

"Some of them say their prayers. I don't have time to make them all kneel; there are so many of them. Some of them are school-teachers. We children had a school in Oxford, N. C., I had a church at my house; that's where my first revival took place."

From discussing the dolls' school her conversation drifted to her own education.

"Do you read fairy tales?"

"Some."

"Do you believe in fairies?"

"I don't know—maybe. I suppose so. I never saw one. There is one piece I like in Mother Goose—That is 'Polly put the kettle on.' I like it because it's the first piece I ever learned."

"Which do you like to read most—fairy tales, Mother Goose, or your little Bible?" asked the reporter.

"My Bible, because, said she," with emphasis, "because I can't carry my other books traveling."

"Are you afraid of the dark?"

"No, not at all."

Then she chattered on about Thanksgiving and Christmas.

"I don't hang up my stocking because I have a tree. I'd like to see Santa Claus."

"What's Thanksgiving for?"

"It's to give thanks to the Lord for sparing us from one Thanksgiving Day to the next."

She had never heard of the New Woman, and did not receive the description of one with enthusiasm.

"I wouldn't think it right, because I think a woman should keep in her place," was her comment.

The little preacher has never been to a party, but has given birthday entertainments. When asked how they were conducted she said:

"We sing, and pray, have cakes, ice cream and candy."

"Don't you ever play 'Puss in the Corner' or 'Drop the Handkerchief?'"

"I have played that last. But there is a way they play it with a song and I think that is wrong. There is sin in a song that has't religion in it.

When asked about dancing she replied with conviction: "Once dancing was used in a way of praising the Lord, but now we make a sin of it, because we put our whole heart and soul in it, and take our minds off of Jesus."

"Is your mind never off Him for an instant?"

"Never."

"Not even at a Thanksgiving dinner, where there is turkey, and cranberries and plum pudding?"

"Never."

CHAPTER II.

CALLED TO THE MINISTRY—EVANGELISTIC WORK IN THE SOUTH—OVERFLOWING CONGREGATIONS—ENTERING SCHOOL—INVITED TO NEW YORK.

When about seven years of age, Cleretta announced to her parents her divine call to preach the Gospel but they tried to discourage her and to divert her from this purpose by telling her that she was too young and uninformed in the Scriptures to attempt and undertake so responsible and important a work. But, nothing daunted, she insisted and announced to her friends that God had commanded and commissioned her to proclaim His truth to the people; and, therefore, she preached her first sermon at a camp meeting at Raleigh, N. C., August 17th, 1893. When it is remembered that this little girl-preacher, or "pickaninny preacher," as she is generally called, had never attended school, but was taught simply to read by her parents, it was certainly marvelous to behold the command of language, knowledge of the Bible and elocutionary powers exhibited by her in this her first sermon, of one half hour long, delivered to a large congre-

gation. That sermon made her famous. Invitations to preach from churches and from white and colored people in the adjoining cities and towns poured in upon this tiny little preacher. Cleretta and her mother started out at once upon an evangelistic tour, in which the inspired little preacher did the preaching and praying, and Mrs. Avery conducted the singing. Large revivals were held at Cheraw, Society Hill, Florence, Georgetown, Darlington, and many other places in North and South Carolina, in which hundreds of grown persons and many children were truly converted. A reporter of the *News and Courier*, the leading paper in South Carolina, gives the following account of her preaching recently at Darlington, South Carolina:

"For two weeks past Cleretta Nora Avery, a little nine-year-old colored girl, has been creating a sensation here. She is a little girl preacher, and during her entire stay she has preached three sermons daily, and whites and blacks, the latter especially, attended the services in large numbers. In this extremely hot weather she shows no fatigue, her voice did not fail at all, and, strange to say, she has said nothing that should not have been said. She is small, weighing sixty or seventy-five pounds, probably. In size, manner and general appearance she is a child, and from this standpoint she is most remarkable.

"Her sermons are never argumentative nor discussive, but she frequently states thoughts and ideas well worth thinking over. A vein of pathos goes through all that she says, and her vividly picturesque and poetic style often carries away the colored portion of her hearers. She seems to have a vague dread of eternity, and always alludes to this vast unknown as 'way over yonder.'

"She is young, small of stature, and is, beyond doubt, a little child, and yet she preaches sermons that have made their impression upon all who heard, and this is the 'simple wonder' of it all. Her face is quiet and thoughtful, and universal comment has been made about the expression of her eyes. They are large, brown, and thoughtful, very expressive and luminous, varying but little throughout her entire sermon, always keeping a steady gleam that changes occasionally, but never very much.

"Her manner when speaking on any subject is not childish; on the contrary, she is calm, deliberate and remarkably self-possessed, and talks of religion as a mature Christian would. She makes no notes of what she intends saying, but after reading a few verses from the Bible she announces her subject, and generally sticks to it; closes the Book and says what she has to say. She has all the style in voice, intonation, delivery and gesture of an experienced pulpit speaker. Her speech is fluent and easy, her

voice is modulated, and in approaching a climax she suggests at times the idea that she is mimicking some preacher, so faithfully does she reproduce what we see and hear so often. No matter how large the congregation, how many whites are present, or how much shouting is done, she seems to be thinking only of what she is saying, and nothing distracts her or claims any share of her attention."

When it is remembered that this "little girl preacher," as she is generally called, never had the opportunity of attending school but was taught simply to read by her parents, it is certainly marvelous to behold her command of language, knowledge of the Bible, and elocutionary powers.

Cleretta came to Charleston, S. C., early this fall to enter and connect herself with the Charleston Industrial Institute and Home for Girls, an institution founded a few years ago by a number of leading colored ministers and laymen of this city for the intellectual, moral and industrial training of some of the thousands of colored boys and girls who are without any school facilities in this city, and are therefore growing up in ignorance, idleness and crime. The demand for her to preach was very great, and during four weeks she has packed several of the largest colored churches three times a day with large crowds of white and colored people, and many persons have been added to the colored churches as the result of her preaching. Under the heading of "An Infant Phenomenon" the News and Courier of a recent date has the following concerning this little prodigy:

"This little girl preacher, Cleretta Nora Avery of whom there has been so much talk in the up country, is now in Charleston, and has during the past week been preaching at the Morris-street Baptist Church before large audiences. Yesterday the little girl preached morning, afternoon and evening, and the crowds were larger than before. At the afternoon service the church was crowded and seats were placed in the aisles near the platform, and a large number of white ladies were present. The platform was occupied by the pastor, the Rev. J. L. Dart, the elder, Mrs. Avery, and Cleretta Avery, the girl preacher. The child, for she is but ten years old, and looks younger, sat in a large chair to the right and scanned with interest the audience. She has large, pretty eyes, good features and a dark olive complexion. Sitting in the chair her heelless shoes were two inches from the floor. She was tastefully dressed in black and wore a soft felt hat. Mr. Dart, in introducing the little preacher, said that she had been suffering with a bad cold for several days, but was, nevertheless, anxious to essay this, her second service that day.

"Cleretta Avery then came to the improvised reading desk (the regular

one having been temporarily displaced on account of its height), read a portion of the second chapter of Matthew, and made a prayer, simple, yet complete—a prayer for strength and keener sight. ‘Oh, Lord,’ said this childish petitioner in closing, ‘even what we fail to ask for do not fail to give us.’ Her voice was low and tremulous at first, but when, after a hymn by the congregation, she read out the subject of her discourse, it was strangely resonant and clear. Her gestures were good and her manner very earnest. She read the portions of St. John which precede the raising of Lazarus, and selected from them several sentences to emphasize it. ‘Jesus is the resurrection,’ she said, ‘and in Him we shall live and never die. The immortal soul must live, but, oh, my friends, shall it live with God in heaven or with the devil in hell? If we believe in the Savior we know He has saved us and others can be saved. It is for us to help the sinners and turn them around. I wish I could see every sinner turned around and marching to eternal glory.’

“‘We know there is a God; we know that Jesus can do all things. Look! He speaks to the winds and the storms, and all is peace. He is the resurrection. He holds the keys of death and hell. Dear friends, the time is soon coming when you will stand near the door. Will He say to you, “Come with me to heaven,” or send you down to hell? We want to get ready. If we must live and never die, let it be where there is rest. Many of us have friends who have gone before us; shall we not meet them again in the joys of heaven, when Gabriel blows his trumpet and the graves give up their dead?’

“‘Friends, Jesus is a mighty captain; He is a mighty doctor. When we need a leader He comes to us; when we are ill He comforts us. He is our friend when all others fail us.

“‘If sinners only knew the dangerous path they are following they would turn back—the path that leads to hell. I can imagine I hear the doomed ones in hell warning the sinners to turn back. We want the Christians to be true and pure and fight until the war is over. We want sinners to join this army. No one knows how sweet is religion until they have it. Sinners, oh! make up your minds and change from nature to grace before it is too late. The angels are beckoning to you; do not say you cannot give up the world and its pleasures. Turn all around and accept grace. You are walking on the brink of hell. Many sinners are allowed to return from the very edge of hell that they may repent. Christians, if the spark is nearly out, if you are almost in despair, go to Jesus; He will renew your strength. Sinners, we want you to get religion. You will see no great wonders, but you will be so happy! You will love the

whole world and wish you could take everybody in your arms and fly away to Heaven. Christians, fight until the war is ended, I have entered the fight and for more than a year have done my best. I am not weary. I will fight until I go to Jesus. Pray for me, my friends; I need your prayers, we all need prayer, and I will pray for you, that you may live and never die, with Jesus, who is the resurrection."

The fame of this little colored girl preacher has reached the great metropolis, and the prominent papers of New York have invited Cleretta to visit that city. She has invitations from many places to preach, and several white and colored friends have written beautiful letters to her about her preaching and work.

Among the many letters she received on this tour of preaching is the following:

LESTER, MARLBORO COUNTY, S. C., August 26, 1895.

Miss Cleretta Avery:

DEAR MISS :—Having had the pleasure of hearing you preach twice in Bennettsville yesterday—morning and in the afternoon—I am more than anxious to hear you preach again. After hearing and seeing you for myself I am satisfied that you are all you claim to be. Several of my race—I am an Anglo-Saxon—believe you are a humbug; but to all such I say "go and hear for yourself, and do not believe me only and you will be certainly convinced." I believe you are a child, inspired by our precious, heavenly father to tell to *all* that Jesus died to save sinners, My object in writing you this letter is this; I am anxious to have a history of yourself. Please write a brief, condensed history of yourself and send it to me by mail. Do me the kindness to give the following particulars: date of your birth, age at which you first knew right from wrong, age at your conversion, your present age, how long you have been preaching, do you prepare your sermons, your full name and the names of your parents, also your birthplace and that of your parents. If you do not answer letters please have your mother answer this one. You will remember me, perhaps, as the young white man who gave you some money and shook hands with you in the colored Baptist Church of Bennettsville, after preaching yesterday morning. If you will keep me posted as to your address I will send you small sums of money at intervals to help you carry on the work of rescuing souls.

Wishing you God-speed in your glorious work and trusting that God may give you *many* souls for your work as stars in your crown, I beg, dear sister, to remain,

Yours fraternally,

ROBERT L. PEARSON,

Postmaster.

We know there is a God; we know that Jesus can do all things! Look! He speaks to the wind and the storm and all is peace. He is the resurrection. He holds the keys of death and hell. Dear friends, the time is soon coming when you will stand near the door, will He say to you, 'Come with me to heaven, or send you down to hell. We want you to get ready. If we must live and never die, let it be where there is rest. Many of us have friends who have gone before us, shall we not meet them again in the joys of heaven, when Gabriel blows his trumpet and the graves give up their dead?

Friends, Jesus is a mighty Captain; He is a mighty Doctor. When we need a leader, He comes to us; when we are ill he comforts us. He is our friend when all others fail us.

If sinners only knew the dangerous path they are following they would turn back, the path that leads to hell. I can imagine I hear the doomed ones in hell warning the sinner to turn. We want the Christians to be true and pure and fight until the war is over. We want sinners to join this army. No one knows how sweet is religion until they have it. Sinners, Oh! make up your minds and change from nature to grace before it is too late. The angels are beckoning to you, do not say you cannot give up the world and its pleasures. Turn all around and accept grace. You are walking on the brink of hell. Many sinners are allowed to return from the very edge of hell that they may repent. Christians, if the spark is nearly out, if you are almost in despair, go to Jesus; He will renew your strength. Sinners, we want you to get religion. You will see no great wonders, but you will be so happy! You will love the whole world, and wish you could take everybody in your arms and fly away to heaven. Christians, fight until the war is ended. I have entered the fight, and for more than a year have done my best. I am not weary. I will fight until I go to Jesus. Pray for me, my friends. I need your prayers; we all need prayers, and I will pray for you, that you may live and never die, with Jesus, who is the resurrection.

The newspapers of the country generally took up the remarkable preaching of this wonderful colored child. She received many letters and invitations from prominent ministers in the leading cities of the North and South. And as she desired to help in the development of that worthy institution at Charleston, where she had received some literary instruction, by erecting there a building for the instruction of friendless and destitute colored girls, Cleretta decided to visit New York city for a few months. The New York *Sun* of October 15th, 1895, gave the following account of Cleretta's preaching in the Carolinas:

"A South Carolina pickaninny—she may be called that, for she is in the 9th year of her age and black—is preaching the Gospel with power to the sinners of that State. She began to exhort when 7 years old, and she has labored both in North Carolina and South Carolina since that time. She is described as a prodigy, and her sermons are said to be wonderful. Recently, when preaching in Marlboro County, both blacks and whites crowded to hear her. Large numbers of sinners are converted through her stirring appeals. At Oxford her converts numbered 150; at Wadesboro, 50; at Sanford, 34; at Marion, 39; at Society Hill 22; at Vass, 10, and at other places yet more. The ten converts at Vass were the fruits of a single day's work. She does not always compose her own sermons; she can repeat any sermon which she has once heard. White sinners as well as black are among her converts. She can recite whole chapters of the Gospel. Her first name is Cleretta.

"We can say to this preaching pickaninny that there is a large field for her among the black people of this city, very many of whom are flagrant sinners, tough as any in South Carolina. She can easily find a place in which to preach here; and if her eloquence is as captivating as the Rev. Mr. Streater says it is, white people as well as colored will enjoy it. We have no preacher of that kind here. Madison Square Garden might be hired for her. We promise to give a full report of the first sermon she delivers in this city, if it is up to the mark.

About the middle of November following, Cleretta, her mother and the Rev. J. L. Dart left that city for the great metropolis, taking with them the benedictions of many, and several letters of commendation of which the following is a specimen :

CHARLESTON, S. C., October 28th, 1895.

Dear Brethren of the Ministry:

I take special pleasure in commending to your favor Miss Cleretta Nora Avery, the little girl preacher. She has done much good in this city. She is not only a great wonder, but a mighty power, and is capable of doing much good for the Master's cause by her preaching. She certainly must be inspired. She preached nine sermons in my church to immense crowds, and her sermons aroused my entire Church and resulted in the conversion of many precious souls. I have never seen such a stir among the people in my life as she caused in this city in all the churches.

Yours most truly,

J. H. WELCH,

Pastor Mt. Zion A. M. E. Church.

CHAPTER III.

CLERETTA VISITS NEW YORK—CREATES A GREAT SENSATION—EVANGELISTIC WORK—LETTERS.

From the day of arrival of the little "Pickanniny preacher" and her attendants in New York City until Christmas morning, when we left, Cleretta was kept very busy. It was soon noised abroad that the little child wonder had reached the great metropolis. Numerous newspaper reporters and writers for almost every paper in that great city called and had lengthy interviews with her. These reporters followed us from church to church, and from city to city, and they devoted two and three columns of their papers to full reports of Cleretta's sermons, and in some cases gave large, life-sized illustrations of her. These sermons, pictures and attractive headlines in the *New York Sun*, *Herald*, *Journal*, *Advertiser*, *Recorder*, *World*, *Press*, and other leading papers created a decided sensation among all the people of that city. The pastors of several of the leading white and colored churches in New York, Brooklyn and the adjoining cities and towns came to us and invited Cleretta to preach to their congregations. In these churches during her six weeks stay in the North, the little preacher addressed more than 100,000 persons and preached more than one hundred sermons, speaking four times a day, sometimes. The churches, the Gospel missions, the John's Street Noonday Prayer Meeting and other places were crowded to hear her.

Hundreds were happily converted. On one occasion, at the Mount Olivet Baptist Church, New York, when she had finished her sermon and many persons rushed forward and requested her to pray for them, which she did, and at the conclusion of the service ten persons arose and declared that they had found a hope in the Saviour. Cleretta is truly a winner of souls, and all her converts loved her and many of them followed her from church to church. She corresponds with many of them regularly, and thus encourages them to hold fast to Christ.

We shall bring this sketch of the life of Cleretta Nora Avery to a close by inserting a few of the many letters that we have received from the North since our little preacher returned to her Sunny South, where she is now preaching and conducting large revivals, and fitting herself by careful study for greater usefulness in the future.

This letter is from the pastor of the Macdougall Street Baptist Church, (white) of New York :

NEW YORK, February 13th.

MY DEAR DR. DART :—I am glad that you and the little girl preacher and her mother have reached your homes in safety and you feel rested

after your laborious trip up North. I shall always cherish the remembrance of your service in my church. It was the beginning of good things to us. When I offered you the church I was alone; neither trustees nor deacons liked the idea, but they did not oppose me. But after the service they were all delighted with the little girl, and our church has been in a state of revival ever since. I regard the little girl preacher a marvel, and I feel that there are great possibilities in her. I hope that many clergymen will follow our example and open their doors wide for the little preacher that she may in her own peculiar, pathetic way—a preacher *sui generis*—point sinners to the Mighty to save.

I remain yours truly,

D. V. GWILYM.

The next letter is from the honored pastor of a large church in New Jersey :

EAST ORANGE, N. J., February 13th.

DEAR BROTHER :—I wish to say that Cleretta Nora Avery is truly wonder of the age. She made a lasting impression upon the minds of her Orange congregations. All who heard her took knowledge of her that she had been with Jesus. Her command of language, musical voice, graceful gestures, profound thought, clear conception of the Word of God, vivid illustration, and magic influence over the hearts of men stamp her as a born linguist, thinker, orator and preacher.

Yours truly,

GEO. E. READ.

Our last letter is from the Rev. Dr. J. S. Caldwell, pastor of the A. M. E. Zion Church, New York :

DEAR BROTHER :—I take pleasure in stating for the benefit of the public that Cleretta Nora Avery started her Northern Evangelistic work in my church in the city of New York. She addressed an audience of nearly 3,000 people for at least twenty-five minutes, holding them spell-bound while she delivered to them the simple Gospel truth. I am convinced that the child is sent from God and has a God-given message to proclaim to the world. She ought to be seen and heard in every town and hamlet of our country, if it is possible. New York was stirred up by her simple preaching as deeply as though it had been a Moody or a Sam Jones.

Yours in Gospel Bonds,

J. S. CALDWELL,

Pastor A. M. E. Zion Church.

In conclusion we desire to return sincere thanks to the host of friends of the little girl preacher for the many kindnesses shown to herself and the

educational cause which she represents, and to request the continuance of their prayers that she might be thoroughly educated, filled with the Holy Spirit and accomplish much good for God and her people in her day and generation.

THE WONDER OF WONDERS.

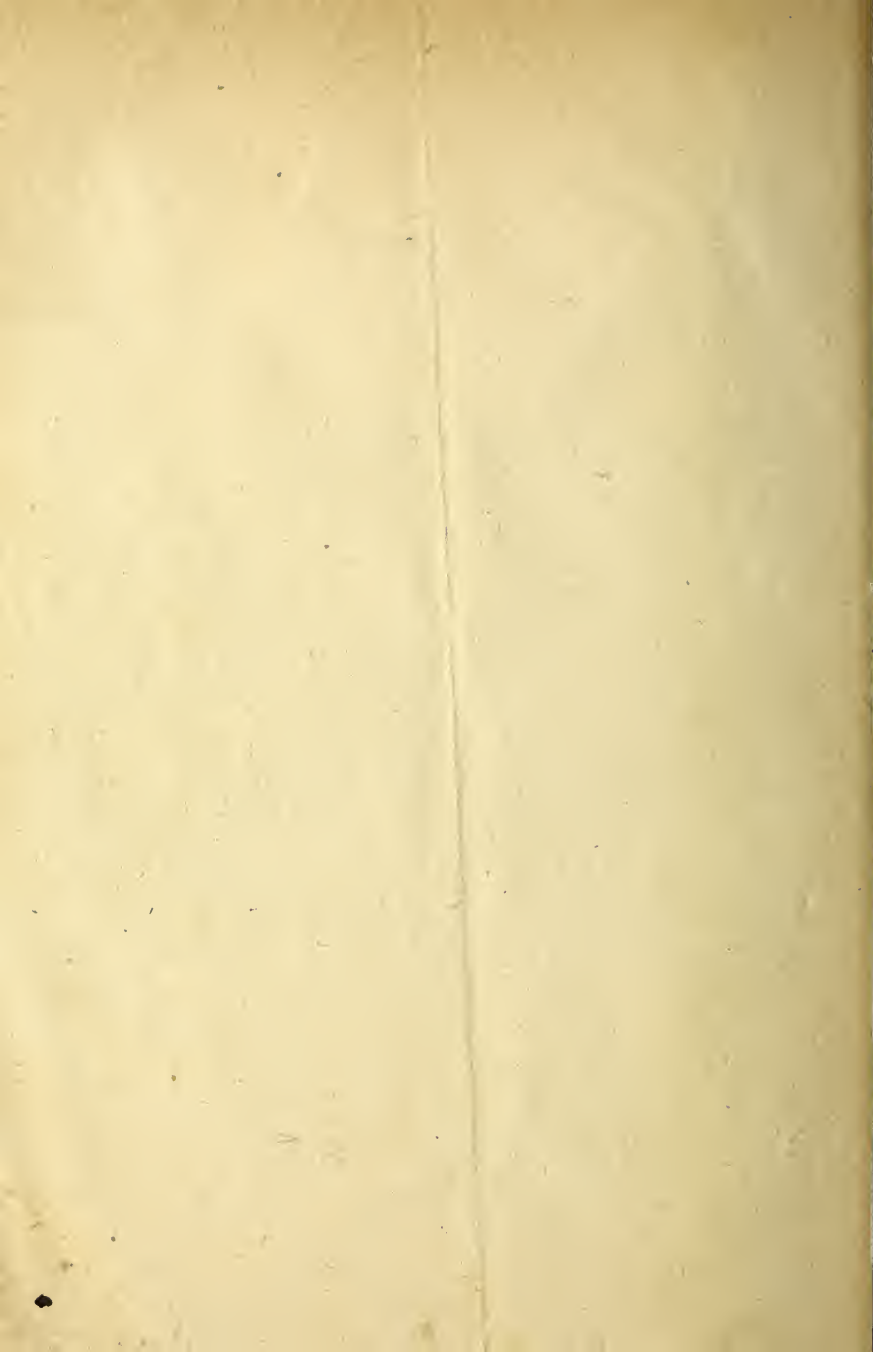
[*From the Wilmington, (N. C.) Record.*]

The preaching of Cleretta Nora Avery is the wonder of this century. A wee bit of humanity, appearing when one first looks upon her as a mere school girl preparing to "recite her piece;" but after she has introduced her subject and begins her sermon, the little girl begins to grow and expand until one sees before him—not the little girl—but a powerful woman, a variatable giant intelligence and inspiration. Her sermons are forceful, logical and with all eloquent.

Cleretta's father was a minister and it seem that the work begun by the father is being completed by the daughter. As the mantle fell from Elijah upon Elisha, so it seems that the mantle of inspiration has fallen upon this wonderful colored child. It is claimed for her that she was converted at the age of 18 months. Be this is as it may her preaching is wonderful as the great crowds which follow her from place to place will attest.



CLERETTA AT PLAY WITH HER DOLLS.



8-5-0